

**Comments on FCC Notice of Proposed Rule Making - EB Docket No. 06-119
(Recommendations of the Independent Panel Reviewing Hurricane Katrina's
Impact on Communication Systems)**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Proposed Rule Making regarding the recommendations of the independent panel that reviewed Hurricane Katrina's impact on communication systems. My comments are limited to the role of amateur radio during emergencies. I have been a licensed amateur radio operator for 38 years and have served as the ARRL Section Manager for Louisiana since April 2000.

Three specific recommendations made by the independent panel that could affect amateur radio are as follows:

1. Waiver of amateur radio and license exempt rules permitting transmissions necessary to meet essential communication needs,
2. Waiver of application filing deadlines, and
3. A streamlined special temporary authority (STA) process.

Concerning recommendation #1, Subpart E (Providing Emergency Communications) in Part 97 of the Commission's rules for the Amateur Radio Service already provides that "When normal communication systems are overloaded, damaged or disrupted because a disaster has occurred, or is likely to occur, in an area where the amateur service is regulated by the FCC, an amateur station may make transmissions necessary to meet essential communication needs and facilitate relief actions." In addition, the current rules provide that "No provision of these rules prevents the use by an amateur station of any means of radiocommunication at its disposal to provide essential communication needs in connection with the immediate safety of human life and immediate protection of property when normal communication systems are not available." These current provisions in the rules already permit emergency transmissions via amateur radio necessary to meet essential communication needs, regardless of the class of license (if any) held by the operator. Thus, the waiver described in recommendation #1 above is superfluous as far as the Amateur Radio Service is concerned.

Ideally, only the most experienced and knowledgeable amateur radio operators should conduct emergency communications. Rather than adopting waiver language that might encourage some radio amateurs to exceed their license privileges during disasters to conduct non-essential communications, the Commission should further encourage radio amateurs to pursue

additional training in both the technical and operating arts of the Amateur Radio Service.

Concerning recommendation #2, I think the Commission should extend the deadline for Amateur Radio Service applicants living within a designated disaster area. For example, extending the deadline for a radio amateur in a disaster area to renew his license is entirely appropriate.

Concerning recommendation #3, I think the current rules make this recommendation superfluous for the Amateur Radio Service essentially in the same manner as described for recommendation #1. During a communications emergency, any amateur radio operator may do whatever is necessary to conduct essential communications. After the communications emergency is over, the normal STA process can be pursued if necessary.

In addition to the three specific recommendations put forth by the independent panel, I would like to recommend that the Commission eliminate all of the language in Part 97 pertaining to the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES). I believe that RACES has outlived its usefulness; its presence in Part 97 needlessly complicates the relationship between amateur radio and the public. The limitations imposed by RACES are well known and do little or nothing to enhance the ability of amateur radio in providing emergency communications on behalf of governmental or relief agencies. Eliminating RACES is perhaps the simplest thing that the Commission can do to enhance the emergency communications capability of amateur radio.

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